



We're changing the equation

Teacher Spotlight: September 2019

Katie Coccoaro – Media Specialist and EVA teacher at Trailside Elementary

1) Where are you from?

We are originally from upstate New York, then we moved to Southern California and then on to Park City - we love it!

2) How did you start as a teacher? Give us some background. Did you always know? Was it a roundabout realization?

I started teaching right after I graduated from college. I grew up with two educators - my mom was a kindergarten teacher and my dad was a high school guidance counselor.

I changed majors a few times and tried out a few things - but teaching is what stuck! I taught school before my children were born, then took a 12-year break - and now I'm back at it.

3) What/who inspired you to be a teacher?

Definitely my parents!

4) What values guide your work?

I love to guide the kids. There's so much going on in their lives, and they are being bombarded with so many things, especially on social media. It feels *so* great to steer them toward kindness and being more thoughtful.

4) How long have you been a teacher? How long in PCSD? What grades/classes have you taught?

I've been teaching for about five years in the Park City School District - all of it at Trailside.

My first two years, I was a substitute teacher, then, I worked in the library on a job share for two-and-a-half years. Now, I work in the library and EVA!

5) Why Park City?

We initially moved here for my husband's job. My in-laws used to spend a lot of time here in the summer so we would come out for a week or so at a time and we loved it here. It happened to work out that my husband's work brought us here. He's since moved onto a new company, but we stayed put.

6) Difference teaching in Park City versus other districts? (If you've taught in other districts.)

In my first round of teaching, I worked in special education, as a kindergarten and first grade teacher. So it's definitely tough to compare since what I'm doing in Park City is already so different from that experience!

7) What's the best thing about teaching in Park City School District?

It's so amazing how much support there is: support from not only the Education Foundation but also the community. I have never worked anywhere with so much support!

Of course, personally, with EVA, getting to bring art to the schools is a really cool thing, since it wouldn't exist otherwise. There were no specialist classes in California. To come to Park City and be able to have P.E. and art is just wonderful.

8) Best day or moment or part about teaching?

Whenever there's a student who is struggling and you see that light bulb go on. The realization of the ability to participate is so great.

9) What does PCEF mean to you?

Because my own two kids are going through Park City School District, the Park City Education Foundation is even more important to me personally. I see the amazing programs they fund. My kids get to participate in these programs, which they love -- especially art!

PCEF also funds the maker space in our TSES library, along with the mindfulness classes for teachers. Both of these have been amazing for me as a teacher and also for our students.

10) Kids/Family?

I have a 12-year-old son at Ecker and a 14-year-old daughter at Treasure, my husband, and our dog, an English Mastiff named Roark.

11) Hobbies/Passions?

I am a lifelong runner. I started when I was ten years old and I have never stopped. Not only do I run, but I also coach Park City Running Club three days a week.

Running is my sanity - and sometimes my running is my family's sanity, too. In fact, if I haven't gone out for a couple of days, there are times when my husband will suggest that I might need to head out for a run. And yes, I Run with Ed!

I also like to hike with my dog, and I love to read.

12) Degrees and credentials/endorsements

I have a Bachelor's Degree from Boston College in Early Childhood Education and a Master's Degree in Reading and Special Education from Manhattanville College. I'm also in my very last class to get my library endorsement; I'll be done with that in December, and I've just started my ESL endorsement.

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I really want to thank PCEF for their support of students and teachers in our district. The impact they have on Park City schools is just amazing!